

Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA)
U.S. Department of Interior
Bureau of Land Management

OFFICE: *Agua Fria National Monument (AFNM)*

NEPA/TRACKING NUMBER: *DOI-AZ-P030-2012-002 -DNA*

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: *N/A*

PROPOSED ACTION TITLE/TYPE: Big Bug Barrier Modification

LOCATION/LEGAL DESCRIPTION: The proposed action is located at T. 11 N., R. 3 E., Section 20. This area is located approximately 40 miles north of Phoenix, Arizona and 2.5 miles east of Cordes Lakes, Arizona.

APPLICANT (if any): *N/A*

A. Description of the Proposed Action and any applicable mitigation measures

A barrier was constructed in the summer of 2011 to limit access on a road designated as administrative access only. The barrier, consisting of a lockable gate and ghost fence made of steel panels, was constructed to prevent illegal vehicle use in the Agua Fria River. The riparian areas of the Agua Fria River were negatively impacted by motorized vehicle traffic. Due to this impact, Proper Functioning Condition assessments rated the area as "Functional at Risk" with "No Apparent Trend." Following the installation of the barrier, riparian areas immediately exhibited a biological release and conditions improved noticeably.

Despite the installation of the barrier, some vehicle driving in the riparian areas has continued. In December 2011, illegal vehicle access was obtained following the cutting and clearing of vegetation near the Big Bug Barrier. BLM employees placed brush, rocks, and posted "No Motor Vehicle" signs to discourage use of the newly created road. Two days later, BLM staff noticed the illegal road was cleared of debris and the signs were shot. BLM staff again placed vegetation and rocks to discourage use. Illegal access was again made available to the area following the destruction of the locked gate.

Additional fencing and new gate are needed to prevent unauthorized vehicle access into the Agua Fria River. A post and cable fence will be installed parallel to the "Administrative Access Only" road. The fence will be less than 250 feet in length. See map Appendix A.1.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan (LUP) Name: Agua Fria National Monument Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan; Agua Fria National Monument Travel Management.

Date Approved/Amended: **4/22/2010**

☒ The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s): -The proposed action would not impose any constraints on other actions or activities otherwise authorized in the AFNM RMP/EIS. Specific land use and management actions are listed below.

TE-23. Conservation of Federal threatened or endangered, proposed, candidate, and other special status species is promoted by maintaining or restoring their habitats.

WF-1. Maintain, restore, or enhance the diversity, distribution, and viability of populations of native wildlife, and maintain, restore, or enhance overall ecosystem health. Discretionary activities will be managed to ensure connectivity of habitats and maintenance of unrestricted wildlife movement.

WF-7. Emphasize and give priority to managing priority species and priority habitats in the event of conflicts between resource management objectives.

WF-9. Management of habitat for Birds of Conservation Concern will emphasize avoidance or minimizing impacts and restoring and enhancing habitat quality to implement Executive Order 13186. Through the permitting process for all land use authorizations, ensure the maintenance of habitat quantity and quality. Take of migratory birds from authorized activities will be minimized or avoided.

TM-2. Motorized and mechanized uses on all monument lands are limited to designated routes only. Limited to Designated Routes = 70,900 acres

WR-5. Maintain the free-flowing characteristics of the Agua Fria River and the eligible streams by prohibiting new stream impoundments, diversions, channelizing, or rip-rapping to the extent the BLM is authorized under law.

WR-6. Protect the outstandingly remarkable values identified for the Agua Fria River and each eligible stream segment, subject to valid existing rights, until the segment is determined not suitable for designation or Congress makes a decision regarding designation.

WR-7. Protective management actions shall apply to the areas within ¼ mile on either side of the Agua Fria River and each eligible stream segment.

WR-10. Implement route closures, identified in the section on Travel Management, to help protect outstandingly remarkable values along Ash, Sycamore, Silver, Bishop, and Lousy Creeks. Prohibit new vehicle routes in areas managed as wild segments.

RR-57. Fence the Cordes Lakes area (in T. 11N., R. 3 E., Section 20) near the Agua Fria River to prevent motorized access and provide for safe vehicle parking.

RR-59 Provide access points for walk-in and universal access.

C. Identify applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents and other related documents that cover the proposed action.

Environmental Assessment: DOI-AZ-P030-2010-002-EA

**Vehicle Barrier Construction To
Protect Agua Fria River Riparian Areas
Within the Agua Fria National Monument
Yavapai County, Arizona**

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

- 1. Is the proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the exiting NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?**

The proposed action is to extend an existing vehicle barrier 250 feet. This proposed action is the exact same nature and location to the action analyzed and implemented in the Environmental Assessment: DOI-AZ-P030-2010-002-EA. Though the existing barrier is a deterrent to vehicle travel, some illegal access has been obtained to the area following the removal of mesquite trees and grey thorn shrubs. Efforts to cover the illegal trail through vertical mulching, placement of large rocks, and signing did not deter vehicle entry into the river area. Additional post and cable barrier materials are needed to prevent off-highway vehicle (OHV) access into the area which is suitable for designation to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The proposed barrier addition will be physically connected to the existing barrier.

- 2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the new proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values?**

The EA DOI-AZ-P030-2010-002-EA considered two alternatives: the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action. The No Action Alternative analyzed the effects of allowing vehicle access to the riparian areas of the Agua Fria River. The No

Action Alternative wasn't and still isn't consistent with the AFNM ROD and RMP. The Proposed Action, which was implemented in 2011, analyzed the effects of installing vehicle barriers along the Agua Fria River at the River Bend and Big Bug Creek sites. The current proposal, to extend the barrier in the Big Bug Creek area, is consistent with the action implemented with the EA DOI-AZ-P030-2010-002-EA.

- 3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of new information or circumstances (such as, rangeland health standard assessment, recent endangered species listings, and updated lists of BLM-sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?**

No new information or circumstances, listed or proposed species listings, or other circumstances have changed. The finding of no significant impact (FONSI) that was concluded in EA DOI-AZ-P030-2010-002-EA would still be concluded as of the completion of this DNA. Cultural clearances will be conducted prior to any construction to ensure no archeological sites occur where they may be impacted by the proposed action.

- 4. Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?**

No individually or cumulatively significant impacts were identified for the preferred alternative in EA DOI-AZ-P030-2010-002-EA. The proposed action to extend the existing barrier 250 feet to increase effectiveness would not alter this conclusion. Any adverse impacts identified for the preferred alternative, in conjunction with any adverse impacts of other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions will result in negligible impacts to natural resources. Construction activities have the potential to disturb unknown subsurface archaeological resources thus requiring the stipulation for monitoring.

- 5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA documents(s) adequate for the current proposed action?**

Public input regarding the proposed action has been solicited during a public scoping meeting held in the Cordes Lakes community. Representatives of BLM worked with the Cordes Lakes community, which will be most impacted by the project, as well as with the Friends of the AFNM, Arizona Game and Fish Department, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The comment period for the EA ended September 23, 2010, during which 11 written comments were received, all from the general public. The comments generally recognized the need to protect the ecological, biological, and cultural resources in the project area. Several comments were not in favor of fencing the area but instead favored an increased law enforcement presence. Additional comments opposed any

travel restrictions which are not in conformance with the AFNM ROD/RMP.

Concerns were raised about the effects of the barrier project on OHV recreation in the area. OHV travel will continue to be allowed on the 94 miles of designated routes within the AFNM but OHV access to 1.5 miles of a route already designated as closed would be prevented following the installation of the barriers. The degree to which the quality of human environment is affected is negligible.

E. Persons/Agencies/BLM Staff Consulted

Name Title/Resource/Agency Represented

Scott Smith, EZ Ranch
Willie Kelton, Box Bar Ranch
Jake Fousek, Arizona Game and Fish
Department
Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument
Cordes Lakes Community Association
Cordes Lakes Community Members
Greg Beatty, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Following BLM Employees:
Rem Hawes, Agua Fria National Monument
Manager
Amanda James, Natural Resource Specialist
Nancy Stallard, Park Ranger
Leah Baker, Planning and Environmental
Coordinator
Matt Russo, GIS Specialist/Public Affairs
Representative
Mary Skordinsky, Recreation Planner
Brian Culpepper, Archeologist
Tim Hughes, State Lead Wildlife Biologist
J.A. Vacca, Wildlife Biologist
Paul Sitzmann, Wildlife Biologist
Bryan Lausten, Archeologist

Note: Refer to the EA/EIS for a complete list of the team members participating in the preparation of the original environmental analysis or planning documents

CONCLUSION:

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitute BLM's compliance with the requirements of NEPA.

Signed by Paul Sitzmann

Paul Sitzmann – Wildlife Biologist

Signed by Leah Baker

Leah Baker –P&EC

Signed by Rem Hawes

2-24-2012

Rem Hawes – Agua Fria National Monument Manager

Date

Note: The signed Conclusion on this Worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. However, the lease, permit, or other authorization based on this DNA is subject to protest or appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 and the program-specific regulations.